

UNCLAS PRAGUE 000650

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM EZ

SUBJECT: GERMAN REPORTER RAISES OLD VIEWS OF CHILD
PROSTITUTION IN CHEB

- ¶1. The Czech press in late April renewed its coverage of child prostitution in Cheb, a Czech town on the German border. Czech dailies described the account of a German television reporter who asked in a club for sex with children and was taken by one of the girls working there to a flat, where he was shown the 12 year old girl and told the price would be 200 Euros. His videotape, allegedly documenting the offer, is currently with police, who are investigating the case.
- ¶2. Claims of rampant child prostitution are nothing new to the small border town of Cheb, the object of a 2003 study by Catherine Schauer of the German NGO KARO. Though Schauer (who accompanied the reporter during his trip) claimed that Cheb was a "haven" for pedophilia, her report was contested by local police, who said that Schauer had refused to cooperate with them, share her evidence, or document her sources. Nonetheless, Schauer's report caused nationwide action about the problem, and a special police team ("Eger") was formed in 2004 specifically to deal with child prostitution in Cheb. Since 1997, seven cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (child sex tourism) have been investigated in Cheb.
- ¶3. Although the seven investigated cases involved seven separate criminals, this is not true for the other number mentioned in the press. Sixty cases of "endangering the morals of juveniles" were investigated in 2004, but these 60 cases involved only three criminals, who offered the same twelve children to foreigners seeking child sex and then robbed them instead. These cases were investigated under the endangerment statute as there was found to be no evidence of actual sexual assault on the children involved.
- ¶4. Police in Cheb claim that reports that child sex tourism is rampant in Cheb aggravate the existing problem in the town by associating the two in the minds of consumers, most of whom are German. This sentiment is echoed by Interior Minister Frantisek Bublan, whose Ministry heads anti-trafficking efforts in the Czech Republic. As per the cases mentioned in paragraph three, police in Cheb claim Cheb's profile as a "haven" has instigated a new crime: child sex being used as bait to trap and rob foreign consumers, who are then often too ashamed to report the crime to the authorities. This was also the fate of the reporter, who later told police (but not the media) he was robbed of the 200 Euros he was going to be charged for the 12 year old girl.
- ¶5. Comment: As acknowledged in this year's TIP report, the Czechs continue to take anti-trafficking efforts in their country very seriously. While they recognize the problems in Cheb and are working on them, sensational media accounts by reporters unfamiliar with the issue do nothing to help combat TIP in Cheb and possibly augment the existing problem. Police, however, take every account earnestly, and are currently investigating these most recent claims. KARO likewise continues its work in Cheb, though currently hindered by financial woes that forced the NGO to downsize from six to two staff in January 2005.

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